

Passage to India



The entrance to the US\$4m Ananda Spa Institute (above). Western therapies are taught alongside Indian disciplines, like yoga (right)

The company behind the famous Ananda In The Himalayas destination spa is turning to education, with the launch of a US\$4m international training institute. We find out more

The Ananda Spa Institute (ASI) is poised to make its mark on the international spa training scene when it launches in July. Based in Hyderabad, India's sixth-largest city, the 22,000sq ft (2,100sq m) facility is the brainchild of those behind the world-renowned destination spa Ananda In The Himalayas (see p32). It is to be fully owned and operated by IHHR Hospitality, which also owns and manages Ananda spas.

One reason for the development of ASI is to support the rollout of the Ananda spa brand, which is set to see another three wellness sites debut by 2010. But the overall priority is to train therapists worldwide – but particularly those from India – to the high standards that are synonymous with this facility.

Ashok Khanna, managing director of IHHR says: "There was a real need for an international curriculum because there is nothing of this kind in India. Most therapists are non-certified. Also, we were losing too many of our employees to spas all over the world. We plan to roll out close to 50 to 100 therapists a year at the institute and anyone [not just Ananda] can hire them."

A PROMISING START

The aim of ASI is to become a leader in teaching international spa therapies, yoga and ayurveda under one umbrella. To help it do this, IHHR enlisted UK-based spa consultancy HCB Associates, which has worked with training bodies such as the Derby University

School of Hospitality & Leisure in the UK (see SB05/4 p60) as well as with operators such as those at the Shilim Eco Resort and Spa in the Western Ghats, India, scheduled to open in October.

As well as creating the training curricula at ASI, HCB Associates advised on the facility itself. One particular feather in ASI's cap is that it is the first purpose-built wellness training centre in the country.

The institute is located in the 15-acre landscaped grounds of Ista Hyderabad, the latest addition to IHHR's business hotel portfolio, close to the city's financial hub. It also shares Ista's architects, Hock Beng Tan from Singapore. Around INR171.3m (US\$4m, €2.5m, £2m) has been invested in building and kitting out the three-storey property, where an emphasis has been placed on high-spec IT and video-conferencing equipment. The ground floor comprises a library with 24 computer stations, a reception and administrative offices. The second floor features two lecture rooms; three training areas, one for Oriental therapies and mat work, one for body work and the other for facials; a wet treatment training area, consisting of a steamroom, sauna and two beds; and an ayurvedic practice room. All of the beauty equipment has been supplied by UK distributor House of Famuir, while the cosmetic and beauty products used by the students will include Ananda's own in-house brand. Another three lecture rooms, a yoga pavilion, restaurant and gardens on the top floor complete the offering.

AN INDIAN AND WESTERN FOCUS

Another impressive selling point at ASI is the range of diploma and certified training programmes on offer (see box, page 38). Although some details are still being finalised, as it stands there are 43 courses, covering a mix of topics such as business and management skills, beauty treatments, complementary therapies and fitness. To ensure international standards are met, all of the qualifications are accredited by one of two global examination boards: the International Therapy Examination Council (ITEC) and the Confederation of International Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology (CIBTAC). And in line with the Ananda spa brand, there is a particular focus on the traditional Indian practices of ayurveda and yoga, as well as Western-style therapies.

One highlight is the ASI Spa Diploma, a nine-month course for those embarking on a career in the international spa industry. At a cost of US\$13,500 (€8,712, £6,928) the diploma covers aesthetic treatments, body therapies, spa therapies, first aid, IT and business skills, and comprises 800 learning hours, 50 of which include practice in a commercial spa environment. Following this, students can embark on the US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309) ASI Spa Management Diploma, details of which are still being finalised.

There are two other courses which also stand out. The first is the Ayurveda Programme, accredited by the Satya Ayurvedic Trust (SAT) in Coimbatore (an emerging healthcare destination in



India). The programme begins with a 40-hour Basic Principles of Ayurveda course, which costs US\$1,500 (€968, £770). Building on this is the Diploma in Ayurveda, covering in-depth study of 12 ayurvedic therapies, plus ayurvedic medicine. The diploma lasts for 12 weeks, includes 534 teaching hours and costs US\$10,536 (€6,799, £5,407).

The second key area is the Advanced Yoga Teachers' Training Programme, a 200-hour certification course with modules ranging from the philosophy of yoga, through to asanas (seating positions) and design styles of yoga, ayurveda, sutras (ancient texts), vedic chanting, pranayama (breathing techniques) and meditation, as well as teacher training. The programme costs US\$4,390 (€2,833, £2,253) and is recognised by the International Yoga Alliance (IYA).

ASI students must 18 or over, and classes are in English, so Indian students need the national grade 10 certification or an international equivalent. Most ASI courses are full-time but have a provision for part-time study. Student assessments will be made via course work and exams. Grants and scholarships are not currently available.

A QUALITY LINE UP

Over the three years that it's taken to set up ASI, a large proportion of time has been spent sourcing a high quality line-up of staff with years of experience and in-depth knowledge. "Our team have been chosen for their commitment, expertise and their ability to deliver a

first-class product," says Jane Crebbin-Bailey, a partner at HCB Associates.

Institute principal Josephine Wackett, who is also head of ASI's Department for International Therapies, has been working in the beauty and spa industry for more than 30 years. Her previous posts include principal of the Steiner Beauty School in London and chair of CIBTAC and the British Association of Beauty Therapy (BABTAC). Wackett is a council member of the British International Spa Association (BISA) and an international board member for education for the Comité International D'Esthétique et de Cosmétologie (CIDESO).

Ayurvedic studies at ASI will be led by Dr Ramkumar and Renu Gulati. Ramkumar hails from a family with a long tradition in ayurveda and is a founding director of Punarnava Ayurveda, an institute committed to 'authentic ayurveda for universal wellbeing'. For nine years he was also the director of the Ayurvedic Trust in a Coimbatore hospital and has created ayurvedic centres for companies such as Taj Hotels & Resorts (see SB07/3, p22). Gulati has extensive schooling in ayurvedic practices in both the UK and India. She has been treating patients since 2004 and is currently working towards an MSc in Ayurvedic Medicine.

At the helm of the Advanced Yoga Teachers Training Programme is Bhavini Maharaj. Maharaj has been training yoga instructors for five years, having first been taught authentic hatha yoga at the Sivananda Ashram in Kerala, India. She has also been trained in other hatha



The ASI occupies 22,000sq ft over three floors in landscaped grounds (above)

styles, such as ashtanga, bikram, integral and kundalini yoga.

Aside from the teachers, additional expertise comes via links with European and American universities, which are running similar or related training courses, such as hotel and tourism management at Erasmus University Rotterdam in The Netherlands. The links will see guest lecturers from the universities visiting ASI, and Crebbin Bailey hopes to set up student exchange programmes, too. Other partnerships have been made with the University of Derby in the UK, Vienna's Johanneum Institute School of Management, Cornell University and the University of Texas.

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL

At full capacity ASI is designed to accommodate 120 students, spread over three sets of intakes a year in January, May and September. To test the waters, ASI is planning a soft opening in July, when only a selection of courses will be available to students. "This is to ensure that all systems are fully functional and operational and that all the staff are familiar with their surroundings – we do not want a Heathrow Terminal 5 situation!". However, everything is expected to be fully up and running by this September.

It is predicted that ASI will appeal both to local students and those from abroad. As an incentive, Indian therapists will be charged only 50 per cent of the full price for courses. Incidentally, Crebbin-Bailey also hopes that more local educators will come on board as the country's spa market continues to grow. For overseas students, it is hoped that the chance to learn about authentic ayurveda and yoga practices in their country of origin will be a big pull.

Good future employment prospects are also expected to attract students. Obviously Ananda is a main contender to hire students once training is completed. However, Khanna points out that not all therapists will be recruited from the

Courses*	Total hours	Cost for foreign students*
ASI Spa Diploma	800 (over nine months)	US\$13,500 (€8,712, £6,928)
ASI Holistic Diploma	450	US\$7,500 (€4,829, £3,843)
ASI Sports Therapy Diploma	400	US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309)
ASI Fitness Instruction Diploma	300	US\$5,250 (€3,380, £2,690)
ASI Healing arts Diploma	250	US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309)
ASI Spa Management Diploma	150 + 36 weeks	US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309)
ASI Massage Therapy Diploma	200	US\$3,375 (€2,173, £1,729)
ASI Oriental Therapies Diploma	350	\$6,000 (actual 5906.25+)
ASI Personal Trainer	300	US\$5,250 (€3,380, £2,690)
Beauty/Aesthetic Treatments	250	US\$4,200 (€2,703, £2,152)
Body Treatments/Therapy	250	US\$4,200 (€2,703, £2,152)
Spa Treatments/Therapy	200	US\$3,375 (€2,173, £1,729)
Sports Massage	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Sports Therapy	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Skin Treatments	100	US\$1,800 (€1,158, £922)
Anatomy & Physiology	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Body Massage	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
A&P + Body massage	100	Under review
Body Electrical Treatments	150	£2,550 (actual 2531+)
Waxing	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Nail Treatments	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Diet & Nutrition	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Aromatherapy	150	US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309)
Indian Head	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Reflexology	150	US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309)
Reiki i	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Reiki ii	35	US\$600 (€386, £307)
Stone Therapy	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Stress Management	50	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Thermal Auricular Therapy	20	US\$350 (€225, £179)
Manual Lymph Drainage	100	US\$1,800 (€1,158, £922)
Electrical Epilation	150	US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309)
Blend Epilation	150	US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309)
Diploma in Gym Instruction	175	US\$2,950 (€1,897, £1,510)
Diploma in Fitness Studio Teaching	200	US\$3,375 (€2,173, £1,729)
Diploma in Personal Training	150	US\$2,550 (€1,646, £1,309)
Diploma in Pilates Teaching	230	US\$3,900 (€2,508, £1,996)
Diploma in Yoga Teaching	174	US\$2,950 (€1,897, £1,510)
Diploma in Business Competence	35	US\$600 (€386, £307)
Teacher Training	100	US\$1,800 (€1,158, £922)
Basic Principles of Ayurveda	40	US\$1,500 (€968, £770)
Diploma in Ayurveda	534	US\$10,536 (€6,799, £5,407)
Advanced Yoga Teachers' Training Programme	200	US\$4,390 (€2,833, £2,253)

*Course costs do not include registration fees

institute as he feels it's important to have a variety of different sources. Negotiations for official training and recruitment partnerships, especially ayurvedic and yoga ones, are also being held with two other major spa and hotel operators.

THE RIGHT STUDENT

Crebbin-Bailey predicts that at least 20 students will sign up for the soft launch in July. Those who have already enrolled include ayurvedic doctors and therapists, yoga students and teachers as well as spa and wellness newcomers.

"We're looking for people who will maximise their learning experience with ASI and represent us in the work-

place," says Crebbin-Bailey. To achieve this, a global awareness marketing plan has been developed, which will include communicating to school and careers advisors throughout India. Launch information will also be disseminated through the media in countries such as the UK and the Middle East.

"I am excited, nervous and very much looking forward to seeing the realisation of a concept we've developed over three years," says Crebbin-Bailey. "As a specialist in the development of spa education, I am pleased to have worked with the award-winning Ananda Spa group in fulfilling the Khanna's vision of spa education for India." ●